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SUBJECT: SERBIAN PRESIDENT TADIC'S VISIT TO CROATIA: A  
PR SUCCESS

¶1. (U) Serbian President Boris Tadic visited Croatia on June 27, meeting with President Stjepan Mesic, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, and traveling with President Mesic to the town of Knin, where the two statesmen met with ethnic Serb returnees. While the visit was held in a highly positive atmosphere, the President of Serbia told the press that the return of refugees was not progressing as it should and invited the Croatian government to ensure greater return of Serb refugees. At the same time, Tadic called on the Knin Serbs to be loyal Croatian citizens. President Mesic said that Tadic's visit showed both countries' desire to continue the process of bringing their relations to normal. "We have ended wars, and now want to build peace. We want everyone to attain the right to return home," Mesic said.

¶2. (U) Mesic and Tadic issues a joint, ten-point statement, noting that the time of war had ended for Croatia and Serbia, and that peace and progress were the goals to strive for. They share the belief that both nations must come to terms with the past, with full cooperation with ICTY being of critical importance. In addition to prosecuting war crimes, the two countries will increase their efforts in shedding light on the fates of the missing persons. The presidents agree that good relations between Serbia and Croatia have special meaning for the political climate in the whole region. The two countries will consistently respect and protect human and minority rights, and will be especially committed to ensuring the return of all refugees who wish to do so. Both Croatia and Serbia see their future in a united Europe, and will support and help each other in pursuing their Euro-Atlantic ambitions.

¶3. (U) Croatian political parties applauded the visit and Tadic's statements, according to press reports. President of the Croatian People's Party (HNS), Vesna Pusic, stated that the return of Serb refugees was important to both Croatia and Serbia and that it was no longer a political issue, but rather, an economic one. Goran Jandrokovic, president of the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs, defined as extremely important the message to the Serb minority in Croatia to be loyal citizens. Serb minority MP Milorad Pupovac stated that the meeting was marked by a very friendly atmosphere. Sounding the sole discordant note, president of the Serb People's Party (SNS) Milan Djukic told the press that Tadic came to Croatia "as a tourist" who wanted to "put on a show for Europe" and not to solve the problems faced by Serb returnees. Press commentary ranged from favorable to poetic, as in this from daily Jutarnji List: "The other day in Knin, Slobodan Milosevic died for the second time. Having

buried so many innocent victims, Serb expansionism ended up as dissolution. Serbia is now on its own, and maybe it is only now that it can become a democratic state, a partner to the EU, and a good neighbor. At the same time, the carefully prepared talks in Knin discouraged the hardcore Croat nationalists and nationalist policies that have already lost legitimacy, from the election point of view, and made it clear to them that in our beautiful country everyone, regardless of ethnicity, faith, or skin color, must and can be treated as equal and worthy citizens. Those are the big things that happened during that completely unconcrete but powerful meeting on the rocky Dalmatian ground."

14. (SBU) One of President Mesic's advisors told DCM on June 28 that the visit was a "complete success" and a major step forward in bilateral relations.

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